

THE ANGLO-AMERICAN SABBATH.

AN ESSAY READ BEFORE

THE NATIONAL SABBATH CONVENTION,

SARATOGA, AUGUST 11, 1863.

BY THE REV. PHILIP SCHAFF, D. D.,
PROFESSOR IN THE THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY, MERCERSBURG, PA.

ON INVITATION OF
THE NEW YORK SABBATH COMMITTEE.

1. *The Anglo-American Theory of the Sabbath.*

THE Sabbath, or weekly day of holy rest, is, next to the family, the oldest institution which God established on earth for the benefit of man. It dates from paradise, from the state of innocence and bliss, before the serpent of sin had stung its deadly fangs into our race. The Sabbath, therefore, as well as the family, must have a general significance: it is rooted and grounded in the physical, intellectual, and moral constitution of our nature as it came from the hands of its Creator, and in the necessity of periodical rest for the health and well-being of body and soul. It is to the week what the night is to the day—a season of repose and reanimation. It is, originally, not a law, but an act of benediction—a blessing and a comfort to man.

The Sabbath was solemnly reaffirmed in the Mosaic legislation as a primitive institution, with an express reference to the creation and the rest of God on the seventh day, in completing and blessing his work,* and at the same time with an additional

* Prof. Fairbairn, *Typology of Scripture*, Vol. II. p. 120, (second edition, 1858,) makes the remark: "It seems as if God, in the appointment of this law, had taken special precautions against the attempts which he foresaw would be made to get free of the institution, and that on this account he laid its foundations deep in the original framework and constitution of nature."

reference to the typical redemption from the bondage of Egypt.* It was embodied, not in the ceremonial and civil, but in the moral law, which is binding for all times, and rises in sacred majesty and grandeur far above all human systems of ethics, as Mount Sinai rises above the desert, and the pyramids of Egypt above the surrounding plain. There the Sabbath law still stands on the first table, as an essential part of that love to God which is the soul and sum of all true religion and virtue, and can as little be spared as any other of the sacred ten—the number of harmony and completeness. Diminution here is necessarily mutilation, and a mutilation not of any human system of legislation or ethics, but of God's own perfect code of morals. Let us remember that the fourth, like every other of the ten commandments, was immediately spoken by the great Jehovah, and that under an overwhelming and unparalleled display of divine majesty; that it was even written by his own finger—written not on paper, like the rest of the Pentateuch, but upon tables of stone—the symbol of durability; that it was preserved in the most sacred place of the tabernacle; that it was emphatically “a sign between Jehovah and his people;”† that it received the express sanction of Christ and his apostles, when they comprehended all the laws of God and the duties of man under the great law of love to God and to our neighbour, and declared that the gospel, far from overthrowing the law, establishes and fulfils it. The Saviour, according to his own solemn declaration, came not to destroy the law or the prophets, but to fulfil.‡ He was neither a revolutionist nor a reactionist, but a reformer in the highest sense of the term; he reënacted the law of Sinai from the mount of beatitudes with the fulness of the gospel blessing, as the fundamental charter of his heavenly kingdom; he explained, deepened, and spiritualized its meaning, satisfied its demands, delivered us from its curse, infused into it a new life, and enables us, by his Holy Spirit, to keep it, in imitation of his own perfect example.

Finally, the Jewish Sabbath rose with the Saviour from the grave, as a new creation, on the morning of the resurrection, with the fulness of the gospel salvation, and descended with

* Deut. v. 15.

† Ezek. xx. 12.

‡ Matt. v. 17-19. Comp. Rom. iii. 31.

the Holy Ghost from his exalted throne of glory on the day of Pentecost; to be observed as the Christian Sabbath, as "the Lord's day," in his church to the end of time. Its temporary, ritual form was abolished, its moral substance was preserved and renewed. The Jewish Sabbath was baptized with fire and the Holy Ghost—it was Christianized and glorified. Henceforward it was emphatically the commemoration day of the resurrection, or of the new spiritual creation and the accomplished redemption, and hence a day of sacred joy and thanksgiving, "the pearl of days," the crown and glory of the week, and a foretaste and pledge of the eternal Sabbath in heaven.

"A day of sweet refection,
A day of sacred love;
A day of resurrection
From earth to heaven above."

The Sabbath, then, rests upon a threefold basis—the original *creation*, the Jewish *legislation*, and the Christian *redemption*. It answers the physical, moral, and religious necessities of man. It is supported by the joint authority of the Old and the New Testament, of the law and the gospel. It has still a twofold legal and evangelical aspect, and we must keep both in view in order to do justice to its character and aim. Like the law in general, the fourth commandment is both negative and positive, prohibitive and injunctive; it is to all men a mirror of God's holiness and our own sinfulness; to the unconverted a wholesome restraint, and a schoolmaster to lead them to Christ, and to the converted a rule of holy obedience. But the Sabbath is also a gospel institution: it was originally a gift of God's goodness to our first parents before the fall; it "was made for man,"* and looks to his physical and spiritual well-being; it was "a delight" to the pious of the old dispensation,† and now under the new dispensation it is fraught with the glorious memories and blessings of Christ's triumph over sin and death, and of the outpouring of the Holy Ghost; it is the connecting link of creation and redemption, of paradise lost and paradise regained; a reminiscence of the paradise of innocence, and an anticipation of the paradise in heaven that can never be lost.

* Mark ii. 27.

† Isaiah lviii. 23.

“It is the day which the Lord hath made; we will rejoice and be glad in it.”* Rest in God is the end of all creation†—not the rest of inaction, but the rest of perfection and benediction, which is one with the highest spiritual activity and joy in unbroken peace and harmony. To this rest the Sabbath points and prepares us from week to week; it is—to borrow freely some expressions from an English poem of the seventeenth century‡—heaven once a week; the next world’s gladness prepossessed in this; a day to seek eternity in time; a lamp that lights man through these dark and dreary days; the rich and full redemption of the whole week’s flight; the milky way chalked out with suns; the pledge and cue of a full rest, and the outer court of glory.

This, in brief positive statement, is the *Anglo-American*, as distinct from the *European-Continental*, theory on the Sabbath, which forms the basis for its practical observance. The difference between the two is general and radical, and strikes the attention of every traveller in its practical effects. There are a few distinguished writers in England, as Milton, Arnold, Whately, Alford, Hesse, who hold substantially the Continental view; as there are, on the other hand, some divines and ministers on the Continent—and their number is increasing—who, with slight modifications, adopt the Anglo-American view, and still more who, while differing from the theory, fully approve of the corresponding practice. But these are the exception, not the rule.

The Anglo-American theory is sometimes called the *legalistic* or *sabbatarian* theory, as distinct from the *Dominican* or *evangelical*, which bases the Sabbath exclusively on the fact of the resurrection of Christ; and from the *ecclesiastical* or *traditional* theory, which bases it on the authority and custom of the church. But we protest against the term, as one-sided and liable to misunderstanding; strictly speaking, it applies only to the Jewish and the Seventh-Day Baptist theory. The genuine Anglo-American theory, as we understand and defend it, is *evangelical* as well as *legal*; it combines what is true in the other theories, which are wrong, not in what they positively

* Ps. cxviii. 24.

† Heb. iii. 11, iv. 1—11.

‡ Henry Vaughan.

affirm, but in what they deny and exclude. It embraces the whole truth of the Sabbath, in its physical, moral, and religious aspects; while the other theories represent merely a fragment of it, and ensure only a small portion of the benefit which emanates from the institution in its integrity and completeness. The Anglo-American theory agrees with the evangelical theory in making the resurrection of the Lord the main—though not the only—basis of the Christian Sabbath or Lord's day; and it agrees with the ecclesiastical theory in honouring the universal custom of the church of all ages—as an additional, though by no means the only or chief, support of its authority. But it differs from both by going back to the primitive creation as the first natural basis of the Sabbath, and in holding to the perpetual obligation of the fourth commandment, as the legal basis of its authority.

2. Objections answered.

We will now notice the objections which are urged against the Anglo-American theory, not only from the open enemies of the Sabbath, but also from the champions of the ecclesiastical and evangelical—or rather ultra- and pseudo-evangelical theories. The objections are directed mainly against the legal feature of the true theory, or the alleged perpetuity of the fourth commandment. They would indeed have force, and drive us logically to the alternative of either giving up the Sabbath, or of adopting the view of the Seventh-Day Baptists, if we based the authority of the Sabbath *exclusively* on the decalogue; but this, as already remarked, is not the genuine American view, as held by our leading divines of the present day. We make as much account of the resurrection of the Saviour in this connection, as the strongest champions of the evangelical view can possibly do; only, while holding fast to this New Testament basis, we do not destroy the old foundation, which was laid by the same eternal and unchangeable God, who raised Christ from the dead, and thereby completed the new spiritual creation.

1. It is objected, first, that the fourth commandment alone required a positive enactment, while all the other commandments of the decalogue are coextensive in their obligation with reason and conscience. But a law may be positive, and yet

generally binding. So is the law of monogamy, which is equally primitive with the institution of the Sabbath, and yet was equally disregarded by heathens and Mohammedans, and fell even into gross neglect among the Jews, until Christ restored it in its primitive purity and force. Where is the Christian who would on this account defend polygamy, which destroys the dignity of woman, and undermines the moral foundation of the family?

The fourth commandment, however, by pointing back to the creation, gives the Sabbath at the same time a place in the order of nature. It is not so much a new commandment, as the solemn reënactment of an institution as old as man himself. It antedates Judaism, and therefore survives it; it combines the three elements of a permanent Christian institution, being rooted in the order of nature, enacted by positive legislation, and confirmed by the gospel of Christ.

2. The second objection is derived from the change of day from the seventh to the first, under the Christian dispensation. But this change is at best a mere matter of form, and does not touch the substance of the commandment. The law itself does not expressly fix on the *last* day of the week; it only requires six days for labour, and *every* seventh day, not necessarily *the* seventh day, (*dies septenus*, not *dies septimus*,) for the rest of worship. It undoubtedly establishes the week of seven days as a divine order, and it would be altogether wrong to substitute a decade for it, as the French, during a short period of madness, tried to do and failed. The number seven (three and four) has a symbolical significance throughout the whole Bible, being the number of the covenant, or of the union of God with man, as three is the number of the Divinity, four the number of the world or mankind, ten the number of completeness and harmony. All days, in themselves considered, are equal before God,* and the selection of the particular day of the week for holy purposes depends on divine facts and commandments. In the Old Testament it was determined by the creation and the typical redemption; in the new dispensation by the resurrection and full redemption of Christ. The gospel only changed the ceremonial or ritual form of the Sabbath law, but preserved

* Rom. xiv. 5.

and renewed its moral substance. It is also worthy of remark, that the first Sabbath of the world, although the last day in the history of God's creation, was in fact the first day in the history of man, who was made on the sixth day, as the crowning work of God.

3. A third objection is taken from the general spirit of the Christian religion, which it is said abolished the Jewish distinction of sacred and profane times and places, and regards all time as sacred to God, and every place of the universe as his dwelling. But this argument closely pressed would turn every week-day into a Sabbath, and give us seven Sabbaths for one. This, for all practical purposes, proves too much for the anti-sabbatists. It anticipates an ideal state of another and better world. There is, indeed, an eternal Sabbath in heaven, which remaineth for the people of God. But while we live on earth, we must, by the necessities of our nature, and by God's own express direction, *labour* as well as rest, and do all our work, with the exception of one day in the week, when we are permitted to rest from *our* work, in order to do the work of *God*, and to prepare ourselves for the eternal rest in heaven. Let us by all means give to God as much of the week as we can, and let us do all our secular work for the glory of God, and thus consecrate all our time on earth to his holy service; but let us not, under the vain delusion of serving him better, withhold from him even that day which he has reserved for his special service. Let us raise the week-days, as much as we can, to the sanctity of the Sabbath, instead of bringing down the Sabbath to the level of ordinary work-days. Our theory, far from secularizing the week-days, has a tendency to elevate them, by bringing them under the hallowed influence of the Lord's day; while the pseudo-evangelical theory has just the opposite effect in practice; it cries out, spirit, but with the masses it ends in flesh; it vindicates liberty, but it favours lawlessness, which is death to all true freedom. There is a false evangelism as well as a false legalism, and the one is just as unchristian and pernicious as the other.

As regards *intrinsic* holiness, all times and seasons, as well as all labour and rest, are alike. This we fully grant. How could we otherwise defend the change of the day from the

seventh to the first, or answer the obvious astronomical objections? God undoubtedly fills all time, as he fills all space. But God is also a God of order; he has constituted man a social being, and fitted him for public as well as private worship, which, like every other act of a finite being, must be regulated by the laws of time and space. There is no more superstition in holding to sacred seasons, than there is in holding to sacred places, provided it be not done in an exclusive and abstract sense. Both are equally necessary and indispensable for the maintenance of social and public worship. We all know that the omnipresent Jehovah may be worshipped in the silent chamber, in the lonely desert, and the dark catacomb, as well as in the temple of Jerusalem and on the Mount Gerizim. But shall we on that account destroy our churches and chapels, or desecrate them by turning them into "houses of merchandise"? The objection we have under consideration, falsely assumes, that the consecration of particular days to God necessarily tends to secularize the other days, when just the contrary is the case. The keeping of the Sabbath, far from interfering with the *continual* service of God, secures, preserves, promotes, and regulates it. The meaning of the Sabbath law is, not that we should give to God the seventh part of our time *only*, but *at least*. So we should pray "without ceasing," according to the apostle's direction; but this, instead of annulling, only increases the obligation of devoting *at least* a certain time of every day to purposes of private devotion. It is not by neglecting, but by strictly observing, the custom of morning and evening prayers, that we can make progress towards our final destination, when our whole life shall be resolved into worship and praise.

4. The last and strongest argument is professedly based upon what we all admit to be the highest authority beyond which there is no appeal. Christ and St. Paul, it is urged, give no countenance to the Anglo-American theory, but deny the perpetuity of the Sabbath law.* But if we keep in mind the general relation of the Saviour to the law, as explained especially

* Matt. xii. 1-5, 10-12; Mark ii. 27; Luke xiii. 11-16, xiv. 2-5; John v. 16, ix. 14; Rom. xiv. 5, 6; Col. ii. 16; Gal. iv. 9, 10.

in the Sermon on the Mount,* we cannot for a moment suppose that He should have shaken the authority of any of God's commandments, the least of which he declared to be more enduring than heaven and earth. The passages so often quoted are not aimed at the Sabbath which the Lord hath made, but at the later Jewish perversion of it. They in no wise oppose the proper observance of the Sabbath by works of divine worship and charity, but the negative, mechanical, self-righteous, and hypocritical sabbatarianism of the Pharisees, who idolized the letter and killed the spirit of the law, who strained at a gnat and swallowed a camel, who exacted tithe from the smallest produce of the garden, and neglected the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith; who, like whited sepulchres, appeared beautiful without, but within were full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness. Wherever the Christian Sabbath is observed in the same spirit, it is an abuse of God's ordinance, and falls, of course, under the same condemnation as the Jewish sabbatarianism of the days of Christ. Christ is indeed "Lord of the Sabbath day."† But in the same sense he is Lord of all the commandments, as the lawgiver is above the law. He is also Lord of life, and yet never weakened the commandment, "Thou shalt not kill," but sharpened and deepened it by condemning even the hatred of the heart against our neighbour as murder before God. He uniformly set an example of the right observance of the Sabbath by devoting it to works of worship and charity. He emphatically declared the Sabbath to be made for the benefit of man.‡ He exhorted his disciples, in the extremities of the last days, to pray that their flight be not on the Sabbath day, lest they might be tempted to desecrate it.§ And as to St. Paul, it is certain that while he opposed the *Jewish* Sabbath and the Judaizing mode of its observance, he observed the *Christian* Sabbath by acts of worship,|| and enjoined its observance by acts of charity upon his congregations.** St. John, the bosom disciple of Christ, the apostle, evangelist, and seer of the New Testament, has sufficiently defined his position on the Sabbath

* Matt. v. 17-19.

† Matt. xii. 8; Mark ii. 28.

‡ Mark ii. 27.

§ Matt. xxiv. 20.

|| Acts xx. 7.

** 1 Cor. xvi. 2.

question by conferring upon the first day of the week the high distinction of the *Lord's Day*.* The apostles in retaining without dispute the divinely established weekly cycle, necessarily retained also the Sabbath, which constitutes and completes the week, and which ceased no more than the weeks to run their ceaseless round. The universal religious observance of Sunday, which we find in the Christian church east and west immediately after the apostles, would be an inexplicable historical mystery without the preceding practice and sanction of the apostles. We conclude, therefore, that they regarded the Sabbath, as it was intended to be, as a *perpetual* sign between Jehovah and his people.†

3. *Characteristics and advantages of the Anglo-American Theory.*

The Anglo-American theory, whatever may be its theoretical merits, has undoubtedly, for all practical purposes for which the Sabbath was instituted, many and great advantages over the Continental European theory, whether it base the Sabbath merely on ecclesiastical authority and custom, or rise higher by deriving it from Christ and the apostles.

1. The Anglo-American theory goes back to the *primitive* Sabbath of the race, given to man as man. It plants it deeply in the original constitution of man and in the order of nature. This is of the utmost importance as a basis for all the temporal benefits of the Sabbath, and for an appeal to utilitarian considerations which must be allowed to have their proper weight upon the world at large, especially on those who cannot be reached by the higher moral and religious considerations. "For godliness is profitable unto all things, and has a promise for this life as well as for that which is to come."

Experience, which speaks louder than argument, comes to the aid of our theory by furnishing abounding proof that the Sabbath rest is favourable and necessary to the body as well as the soul, to the preservation and promotion of health, wealth,

* Rev. i. 9.

† Exod. xxxi. 17: "It is a sign between me and the children of Israel for ever." (סֵמֶן אֵלֹהִים, Sept. σημεῖον αἰώνιον.) The reason assigned goes back significantly to the primitive order, "For in six days," etc. Gen. ii. 2. Comp. Ezek. xx. 12, 20.

and the temporal happiness and prosperity of individuals and communities.

It is an undeniable fact that the two nations which keep the Sabbath most strictly—Great Britain and the United States—are the wealthiest and the freest on earth. The philosophy of this fact is plain. Sabbath-rest is the condition of successful week-labour for man and beast, and successful labour is the parent of wealth. The proper keeping of the Sabbath, moreover, is one of the best schools of moral discipline and self-government, and self-government is the only ground on which rational and national freedom can rest and be permanently maintained.

2. The Anglo-American theory retains the *legal* basis of the Sabbath, by teaching the perpetuity of the fourth commandment. It thus secures to the Sabbath the authority of the divine lawgiver, which attaches to all other parts of the decalogue, and appeals to the conscience of man. It raises it far above the sphere of mere expediency and temporal usefulness into the sphere of moral duty and sacred obligation. It can enforce it by an irresistible, "Thus saith the Lord." By strengthening the decalogue in one member we strengthen all the other members, and promote the general interests of morality; while the ecclesiastical and evangelical theories, so called, by taking out the fourth commandment as a mere temporary arrangement, destroy the completeness and harmony of the decalogue, and tend to undermine its general authority. The Anglo-American theory here has an exegetical as well as a practical advantage over the others, as on it alone can the place of the Sabbath in the *moral* law be satisfactorily explained and vindicated.

3. By placing the fourth commandment on a level with the other commandments, and bringing it especially into close contact with the fifth, which enjoins obedience to parents, and with the seventh commandment, which condemns all unchastity in thought, word, and deed, the Anglo-American theory acknowledges the inseparable connection between the strict observance of the Sabbath and the moral welfare and happiness of the *family*. The Sabbath and the family are the two oldest institutions of God on earth, both date from paradise, both look

towards the happiness of man, both flourish and decay together. What God has joined together no man should dare to put asunder.

4. The Anglo-American theory makes more account of the distinction between the *religious* and the *civil* Sabbath than the Continental, and lays greater stress on the necessity of the latter. It regards the civil Sabbath as essential for public morals and the self-preservation of the state. Hence our Sabbath laws, throughout the land, which militate as little against religious freedom and the separation of church and state, as the laws upholding monogamy. On the contrary, they are a support to our civil and political freedom. For freedom without law is licentiousness and ruin to any people. Our separation of church and state rests on mutual respect and friendship, and is by no means a separation of the nation from Christianity. The religious Sabbath cannot, and ought not to be enforced by law; for all worship and true religion must be the free and voluntary homage of the heart. But the civil Sabbath can and ought to be maintained and protected by legislation, and a Christian community has a natural right to look to their government for the protection of their Sabbath as well as for the protection of their persons and property. All good citizens can rally around the support of the *civil* Sabbath from moral and patriotic motives, whatever may be their religious opinions. Such coöperation is not possible on the Continent of Europe, where church and state are inextricably mixed up.

5. But while we hold fast to all these great characteristics and advantages, let us never lose sight of the fact that the Sabbath is *gospel* as well as law, and its observance a *privilege* as well as a duty. It is law to all citizens, gospel to the believers. If we insist exclusively or chiefly upon the legal element, we are in danger of relapsing into Jewish sabbatarianism, and make its observance a burden instead of a joy. Its advent will then not be hailed but dreaded, especially by the youth, and the way be prepared for a successful reaction, which would sweep away both the evangelical and the legal, the religious and the civil Sabbath, with all its great blessings, from our midst. There is a false legalism as well as a false evangelism, and we must keep equally clear from both extremes.

4. *History of the Sabbath.*

The Christian Sabbath, like every other institution and article of faith, has its *history*—a history full of instruction, warning, and precept. It is intertwined with all the fortunes of Christianity. It was frequently obscured, but never abolished at any period, or in any part of the church, except during the mad days of the reign of terror in France, and even this exception only furnished the negative proof for its indispensable necessity as a safeguard for all public and private morality. With one insignificant exception, it is held in common by all Christian denominations, from the oldest to the youngest, from the largest to the smallest.

The Sabbath before the Reformation.

For the first three centuries, when the church was an illegal sect, and persecuted by the state, Sunday was a purely religious institution. With Constantine the Great, the first Roman emperor who professed Christianity, it became a civil institution, recognised and protected by the laws of the state. Civil legislation, it is true, cannot enforce the sanctification, but it can prevent, to a great extent, the public desecration of Sunday; it cannot and ought not to be coercive and injunctive, but prohibitive and protective. Constantine and his successors prohibited lawsuits and pleadings, theatrical amusements, and physical labour on Sunday, and thus enabled all their Christian subjects to observe the day without disturbance and hindrance.

The Christian Sabbath continued ever since, without interruption, as a religious and civil institution in all Christian lands. But its authority and observance was greatly undermined during the middle ages by the endless multiplication of holy days; each day of the calendar being devoted to the memory of some saint and martyr. This was, at best, a premature anticipation of an ideal state of the future world, when the life of the Christian will be one uninterrupted festival of joy and peace. But the arrangement, in its practical effect on the people, almost inevitably tended to obliterate the distinction between Sunday and the week days, between a day of rest and the days of labour, between one *holy day* of divine appoint-

ment and the many *holidays* of human invention, to promote idleness, the worship of saints, and all manner of superstition, and to obscure the merits of Christ by interposing an army of subordinate mediators and idols between him and his people. We all know to what a fearful extent this perversion and consequent desecration of the Lord's day still prevails all over the Continent of Europe, especially in Roman Catholic countries.

The Sabbath since the Reformation.

We might expect that the Reformation of the sixteenth century should have remedied the evil and revived the primitive purity of the Sabbath as well as of the general system of Christianity, on the basis of the infallible word of God. Luther, Zwingle, Calvin, and Bucer at first favoured the abolition of all holidays with the exception of the Lord's day. But their general antagonism to the Judaizing legalism and ritualism of Rome, their zeal for evangelical freedom, and their imperfect understanding of the well-known words of Christ and Paul against the negative sabbatarianism of the Pharisees, prevented the reformers from attaining to the proper view of the authority and perpetuity of the fourth commandment. This is especially true of Luther, who sometimes represents the whole law of Moses as abolished, and says of the Sabbath, "Keep it holy for its use's sake both to body and soul; but if anywhere the day is made holy for the mere day's sake, if anywhere any one sets up its observance upon a Jewish foundation, then I order you to work on it, to ride on it, to dance on it, to feast on it, to do anything that shall reprove this encroachment on the Christian spirit and liberty." But Luther must never be judged from a single sentence, but be allowed to interpret himself. In other places he represents the observance of Sunday as "good and necessary," and in opposition to the antinomian views of Agricola, he defends the law of Moses as still binding upon Christians. "He who pulls down the law," he correctly remarks, "pulls down at the same time the whole framework of human polity and society. If the law be thrust out of the church, there will no longer be anything recognized as a sin in the world, since the gospel defines and punishes sin only by recurring to the law." Had the reformers foreseen the base

use which has been made of their free expressions on the subject, they would have been far more cautious and careful.

There has been no radical reform of the Sabbath on the Continent of Europe since the Reformation, but rather a fearful progress of Sabbath-desecration in inseparable connection with a growing neglect of public worship. This crying evil forms one of the greatest obstacles to the spread of vital religion among the people, and can never be successfully overcome except on the basis of a stricter theory on the Sabbath, than that which generally prevails in the greater part of the old world.

The Sabbath in England and Scotland.

It was different in Great Britain. The Church of Scotland was the first among the churches of the Reformation to set the example of a more sacred observance of the Lord's day than had been customary since the days of the apostles. She took from the beginning a somewhat radical position against all the annual festivals of the church, even the ancient commemoration days of the birth, passion, and resurrection of our Saviour, and the outpouring of the Holy Ghost, which are certainly innocent in themselves, and may be observed with great benefit to the people. But the loss in this respect was a gain to the weekly commemoration-day of the risen Redeemer. The *First Book of Discipline*, which was drawn up by John Knox and five other ministers, abolishes Christmas, circumcision, and Epiphany, "because they have no assurance in God's word," but enjoins the observance of Sunday in these words: "The Sabbath must be kept strictly in all towns, both forenoon and afternoon, for hearing of the word; at afternoon upon the Sabbath, the Catechism shall be taught, the children examined, and the baptism ministered. Public prayers shall be used upon the Sabbath, as well afternoon as before, when sermons cannot be had." The third General Assembly, which met in June, 1562, resolved to petition the queen for the punishing of Sabbath-breaking, and all the vices which are to be punished according to the law of God, and yet not by the law of the realm. The Assembly of June, 1565, mentions the breaking

of the Sabbath day among "the horrible and detestable crimes" which ought to be punished.

Yet, after all, this was only an approach towards the right view and practice which now prevails in Great Britain. Theoretically John Knox did not differ from his admired friend and teacher, Calvin, on the subject of the Sabbath, and the Scotch Confession of Faith, which he with five others prepared in 1561, makes no express mention of the fourth commandment. The proper Anglo-American theory and practice dates from the closing years of Queen Elizabeth's reign, and took its rise in the Puritan party of the Church of England. It was first clearly and fully set forth in a work of NICHOLAS BOWND, D.D., a graduate of Cambridge, and minister of Norton, in Suffolk, which appeared in 1595, and in an enlarged form in 1606, under the title, "*The Doctrine of the Sabbath, plainly layde forth and soundly proved,*" etc.* This book learnedly labours to show from the Scripture, the Fathers, and the Reformers, that the observation of the Sabbath is not a bare ordinance of man, or a merely civil or ecclesiastical constitution appointed only for polity, but an immortal commandment of Almighty God, and therefore binding on man's conscience; that the Sabbath was given to our first parents; that it was revived on Mount Sinai by God's own voice, with a special note of remembrance, fortified with more reasons than the other precepts, and particularly applied to all sorts of men by name; that the apostles by the direction of God's Spirit, changed the day from the seventh to the eighth, (first,) which we now keep in honour of redemption, and which ought still to be kept by all nations to the end of the world, because we can never have the like cause or direction to change it; that the Sabbath should be spent altogether in God's service, in public and private worship, in works of necessity and charity, while we should carefully abstain

* For a fuller account of this work, and the controversy to which it gave rise, we refer to James Gilfillan's book, *The Sabbath viewed in the light of Reason, Revelation, and History*, 1862, republished by the American Tract Society and the New York Sabbath Committee, 1863, pp. 66, etc. Dr. Bownd wrote, besides the *Doctrine of the Sabbath*, three other works, viz., *The Holy Exercise of Fasting*, (1604,) *A Storehouse of Comfort for the Afflicted in Spirit*, (1604,) and *The Unbelief of Thomas, the Apostle, laid open for Believer*, (1608.)

from all the ordinary works of our calling, and avoid whatever withdraws our heart from the exercises of religion; and that magistrates and princes ought to provide for the observation of the fourth commandment, and compel the people to at least an outward rest, as well as to the keeping of the commandments against murder, adultery, theft, and slander.

The treatise of Dr. Bownd produced a great sensation. "It is almost incredible," says Thomas Fuller, the English historian,* "how taking this doctrine was, partly because of its own purity, and partly from the eminent piety of such persons as maintained it, so that the Lord's day, especially in corporations, began to be precisely kept, people becoming a law to themselves, forbearing such sports as yet by statute permitted; yea, many rejoicing at their own restraint therein. On this day the stoutest fencer laid down the buckler, the most skilful archer unbent his bow, counting all shooting besides the mark; May-games and Morish-dances grew out of request, and good reason that bells should be silenced from ginging about men's legs, if their very ringing in steeples were adjudged unlawful; some of them were ashamed of their former pleasures, like children which, grown bigger, blushing themselves out of their rattles and whistles. Others forbear them for fear of their superiors, and many left them off out of a polite compliance, lest otherwise they should be accounted licentious. Yet learned men were much divided in their judgments about these sabbatarian doctrines. Some embraced them as ancient truths consonant to Scripture, long disused and neglected, now seasonably revived for the increase of piety. Others conceived them grounded on a wrong bottom, but because they tended to the manifest advance of religion, it was pity to oppose them, seeing none have just reason to complain being deceived into their own good. But a third sort flatly fell out with these positions, as galling men's necks with a Jewish yoke, against the liberty of Christians: that Christ, as Lord of the Sabbath, had removed the rigour thereof, and allowed men lawful recreations; that the doctrine put an unequal lustre on the Sunday, on set purpose to eclipse all other holy days to the derogation of the church; that the strict observance was set up out of faction to

* As quoted by Gilfillan, p. 69.

be a character of difference, to brand all for libertines who did not entertain it."

The new theory of the Sabbath, like every great movement in history, had to encounter considerable opposition, and gave rise to the first sabbatarian controversy in the Christian church. But it was ably defended by Greenham, bishop Babington, Perkins, Dod, bishop Andrewes, Dr. Willet, and many others, and soon worked its way into the heart of the English and Scotch people. When in 1603, at the Commencement of the University of Cambridge, the thesis, *Dies Dominicus nititur Verbo Dei*, was publicly maintained, no member of the University put up an *antithesis* in opposition to it. Dr. Twisse, the Moderator of the Westminster Assembly, gives it as his opinion that if the votes of the bishops of England were taken, the major part would concur with the Puritans as touching the doctrine of the Sabbath, rather than against them. The judicious Hooker, whose name is revered by all parties in the Church of England, says: "We are to account the sanctification of one day in seven a duty which God's immutable law doth exact for ever." The Book of Common Prayer bears strong witness to the perpetuity of the fourth commandment, and its binding character upon the Christian conscience, by requiring to each of the ten commandments the response of the people, "Lord, have mercy upon us, and incline our hearts to keep this law." The Puritan theory on the Sabbath penetrated like leaven the churches of England and Scotland, and the strict observance of that day is one of the permanent effects which Puritanism left upon the Anglican church and all its dependencies.

This doctrine was permanently embodied in the Westminster standards, the Confession of Faith, the Larger and Shorter Catechism, and was thus clothed with symbolical authority for all the churches which embraced these standards. The "Westminster Confession of Faith" gives this clear and strong statement of the doctrine:*

"As it is the law of nature, that, in general, a due proportion of time be set apart for the worship of God; so in his word, by a positive, moral, and perpetual commandment, binding all men in all ages, he hath particularly appointed one day in seven for a Sabbath, to be kept holy unto him; which, from the beginning of the world to the resurrection of Christ, was the last day of the week: and from the resurrection of Christ, was changed into the first day of the week.

* Ch. xxi. sect. 7, 8.

which in Scripture is called the Lord's Day, and is to be continued to the end of the world as the Christian Sabbath.

"This Sabbath is then kept holy unto the Lord, when men, after a due preparing of their hearts, and ordering of their common affairs beforehand, do not only observe an holy rest all the day from their own works, words, and thoughts about their worldly employments and recreations: but also are taken up the whole time in the public and private exercises of his worship, and in the duties of necessity and mercy."

This is the doctrine of the Westminster Assembly, which, next to the Synod of Dort, is unquestionably the most important ecclesiastical Synod held in the history of the Reformed Church, and adorned by such distinguished scholars and divines as Lightfoot, Gataker, Twisse, Henderson, Rutherford, Wallis, Reynolds, and Selden. On this point there was no dispute between the Independents and Presbyterians. In Scotland the Westminster standards were at once received, and have been adhered to ever since by all the various branches of Scotch Presbyterianism. The Secession church, the Relief church, the Reformed Presbyterian church, the United Original Seceders, and the Free church, agree with the Established church of Scotland, in holding the Westminster doctrine on the Sabbath.

This doctrine, it must be admitted, goes beyond that of any other symbolical book or confession of faith previously issued in the Christian church. But it is none the less true and scriptural in all its essential features. It is one of the noblest contributions which Great Britain has made to the cause of evangelical truth and piety. Far from being a relapse, it is a real progress in the cause of Christianity and civilization. But a progress on the rock of the Bible: for all true growth in ecclesiastical history is not a growth *beyond* Christ, but a growth *in* Christ, and a deeper apprehension and fuller application of his Spirit, word, and work. We now see the doctrine of justification by faith in every epistle of St. Paul; and yet it was only in the Reformation of the sixteenth century that it was clearly brought out from the mines of the Bible. So we are better prepared now to understand and appreciate the whole Scripture doctrine of the Sabbath, than the church was before the sixteenth century. We have the great test of an experience of more than two hundred years to assist us in taking the right view.

The whole world knows the striking difference between the Continental and the British Sabbath; and every impartial Christian observer must admit the superiority and incalculable

benefits of the latter, in the promotion of every public and private virtue. Even the freedom, wealth, and political greatness of England and Scotland may, to a considerable extent, be traced to the strict observance of the Lord's Day. Let us quote but one testimony, and that of a Frenchman, and a zealous Roman Catholic. "Impartial men," says the celebrated Count Montalembert, "are convinced that the political education by which the lower classes of the English nation surpass other nations—that the extraordinary wealth of England, and its supreme maritime power—are clear proofs of the blessing of God bestowed upon this nation for its distinguished Sabbath observance. Those who behold the enormous commerce of England, in the harbours, the railways, the manufactories, etc., cannot see without astonishment the quiet of the Sabbath-day."

The Sabbath in New England.

It is one of the peculiar marks of divine favour to America, that its foundations are deeply laid in religion, and that the Sabbath, as observed in Scotland and England from the beginning of the seventeenth century, was one of the most cherished institutions of the fathers and founders of our Republic. The history of New England commences with the famous politico-religious covenant of the Pilgrim Fathers, signed on board the *Mayflower*, on the day of its arrival in Cape Cod harbour, on the 11th of November, 1620, which laid the foundation for independent, voluntary, democratic self-government in church and state, and was solemnly inaugurated, on the day following, by the strict observance of a Puritan Sabbath. During the following weeks of anxious and dangerous explorations for a safe harbour and settlement on terra firma, nothing could prevent the Pilgrims from spending every Sabbath in religious retirement, which invigorated them for the severe work of the week. And when, on the ever-memorable 22d of December (new style, or December 11, old style,) they landed on Plymouth Rock, not even the pressing necessities of physical food and protection, nor the cry of some Indian savages, who threatened, as they thought, with an assault, could induce them to break the first Sabbath in their future home. "They were still without the shelter of a roof. At the sharp winter solstice of New England, there was but

‘A screen of leafless branches
Between them and the blast.’

But it was the Lord’s hallowed time, and the work of building must wait.”*

There this small congregation of pious emigrants, the unconseious bearers of the hopes and destinies of a mighty future, met far away from friends and kindred, in a new and inhospitable clime, in dreary, cold December, on a barren rock, threatened by roaming savages, under the stormy sky of heaven, and, in the exercise of the general priesthood of believers, offered the sacrifices of their broken hearts, and the praises of their devout lips to their God and Saviour, on his own appointed day of rest. The Pilgrims were first true to God, and therefore true to themselves, and true to the world. They made religion the chief concern of life, and regarded the glory and enjoyment of God the great end of man, to which everything else must be subordinate. They reasoned, and reasoned correctly, that all lower goods are best secured by securing the highest. They first sought the kingdom of God and his righteousness, well assured that all other things necessary would be added unto them. They knew that the fear of the Lord was the beginning of all wisdom. Their constant sense of dependence on God made them feel independent of men. Being the faithful servants of Christ, they became the true freemen, and the fathers and founders of a Republic of self-governing sovereigns.

The noble example of the Pilgrim fathers was followed by all the Puritan immigrants from Old to New England. The strict observance of the Lord’s day was a universal custom in all New England from the beginning, and has continued without interruption to the present day. It was there ably defended in sermons and tracts, from time to time, by the most distinguished divines, as Jonathan Edwards, President Timothy Dwight, Dr. Humphrey, Dr. Justin Edwards, who have en-

* See Palfrey’s *History of New England*. Boston. 1859. Vol. I., p. 173. This first Puritan Sabbath on the American continent fell on the 24th of December. On Monday the 25th, being Christmas, all were busy felling, sawing, riving or carrying timber. “No man rested all that day,” which they regarded as of purely human invention. In this opposition to annual festivals in honour of Christ, and to the whole idea of a church-year, the Puritans evidently went too far. But we may readily excuse their weakness, in view of their eminent services to the Lord’s Day.

riched the Sabbath literature by contributions of abiding value. It is there interwoven with the whole structure of society—it enters into the sanctuary of every family, it is identified with the earliest and most sacred recollections of every man, woman, and child. The strictness of the New England Sabbath is proverbial, and has only its equal in the Scotch Sabbath. In former days it was no doubt frequently carried to excess, and observed more in the spirit of Jewish legalism than of Christian freedom; but along with these excesses went the innumerable blessings of the day. Its strict observance was an essential part of that moral discipline which made New England what it is to-day, and is abundantly justified by its fruits, which are felt more and more throughout the whole Christian world.

It is unnecessary, even in these days of sectional prejudice, party animosity, and slander, to say one word in praise of New England. Facts and institutions always speak best for themselves. We might say with Daniel Webster, giving his famous eulogy on Massachusetts a more general application to her five sister States: "There they stand: look at them, and judge for yourselves. There is their history, the world knows it by heart: the past at least is secure." The rapid rise and progress of that rocky and barren country called New England, is one of the marvels of modern history. In the short period of two centuries and a half it has attained the height of modern civilization, which it required other countries more than a thousand years to reach. Naturally the poorest part of the United States, it has become the intellectual garden, the busy workshop, and the thinking brain of this vast republic. In general wealth and prosperity, in energy and enterprise, in love of freedom and respect for law, in the diffusion of intelligence and education, in letters and arts, in virtue and religion, in every essential feature of national power and greatness, the people of the six New England States, and more particularly of Massachusetts, need not fear a comparison with the most favoured nation on the globe.*

* Dr. Robert J. Breckinridge, of Kentucky, in a patriotic letter to the Hon. Robert C. Winthrop, dated June 25, 1863, thus speaks of New England: "It may be the will of God that the most dreadful changes await our country. If the very worst comes, I look that true and regulated liberty will perish last in New England. In past years I have spoken freely in disapprobation of much

But the power and influence of New England, owing to the enterprising and restless character of its population, extends far beyond its own limits, and is almost omnipresent in the United States. The twenty thousand Puritans who emigrated from England within the course of twenty years, from 1620 to 1640, and received but few accessions until the modern flood of mixed European immigration set in, have grown into a race of many millions, diffused themselves more or less into every State of the Union, and take a leading part in the organization and development of every new State of the great West to the shores of the Pacific. Their principles have acted like leaven upon the whole lump of American society; their influence reaches into all the ramifications of our commerce, manufactures, politics, literature, and religion; there is hardly a Protestant church or Sabbath-school in the land, from Boston to San Francisco, which does not feel, directly or indirectly, positively or negatively, the intellectual and moral power which constantly emanates from the classical soil of Puritan Christianity.

The Southern enemies of our government, who in former years resorted to New England institutions for an education, acknowledge this fact by applying the term *Yankee* reproachfully to the whole people of the North. But it is rather a term of honour, of which no one need be ashamed. The New Englanders have their idiosyncracies and faults, like every people under the sun, and are apt to run into extremes and all sorts of *isms* in politics, philosophy, and religion; but they have counterbalancing virtues of sterling value, which make them a real blessing to the race. Wherever they go, they carry with them their industry and enterprise, their love of freedom and zeal for education, and, what is better than all, their native, traditional reverence for God's holy word and holy day; and this, far from being a weakness, is one of the

that has been felt as an evil influence from New England, as it appeared to me. But I never doubted—and now less than ever—that the roots of whatever produces freedom, equality, and high civilization, are more deeply set in New England than in any equal population on the face of the earth." We are sure that this noble testimony will be heartily responded to by thousands of Christians in the Middle, Western, and even the Southern States, who are able to rise above the passions of the hour, and to subordinate their sectional and denominational interests and preferences to truly national and catholic considerations.

chief sources of their strength and prosperity, and an unspeakable benefit to the whole country. Let us never forget the debt of gratitude which we owe to New England for the strict observance of the Sabbath.

The American Sabbath.

But the Sabbath, in its strict observance, is by no means a Puritan or New England institution simply: it is truly national American; its sacredness and influence is as wide as the continent from Maine to Georgia, and from the Atlantic to the Pacific. It enters into the bone and sinew of the American character. It is entrenched in our national habits, embodied in our creeds, and guarded by our civil legislation. It is an essential part of American Christianity and morality, and one of the strongest common bonds which unite the different Protestant denominations. The Episcopalian, whether high, or low, or broad in his views of doctrine or policy, the Presbyterian, both of the Old and New School, the Dutch Reformed, the German Reformed, the Lutheran, the Methodist, the Baptist, the Quaker, unite with the Puritan Congregationalist in sacred zeal for the Lord's day, and in abhorrence of its desecration. The venerable French scholar, Duponceau, after long familiarity with America, made the remark, "that of all we claimed as characteristic, our observance of the Sabbath is the only one truly national and American, and for this cause, if for no other, he trusted it would never lose its hold on our affections and patriotism."

This was so, we may say, from the beginning of our nation. The laws of every colony and State, with the single exception, I believe, of Louisiana, which is owing to its French and Roman Catholic origin, recognise this national sentiment, and protect the Christian Sabbath against abuse and desecration. A kind Providence has watched over our legislation in this important matter with singular care. It was influenced by the truly Christian and patriotic conviction of that eminent judge of the Supreme Court of the United States, expressed in this significant sentence: "Where there is no Christian Sabbath, there is no Christian morality; and without this, free government cannot long be sustained." The earlier legislation of New York, for instance, both under Dutch and English rule,

shows the profoundest respect for the civil Sabbath, and the strongest conviction of its public utility and necessity.* Legislation in a republican country like ours always reflects and embodies the ruling sentiment of the community. It is certainly so in this case. It has been asserted by one, especially competent to judge, by long and wide observation,† that “at least nine-tenths of the American-born population, and probably a large majority of the foreign-born, esteem the Sabbath too sacred to be spent as a frivolous holiday. With trifling exceptions, the Christian churches of every name regard the Sabbath as a day to be kept holy unto the Lord, and to be employed in acts of religious worship and charity: so that millions of our citizens are grieved, and justly grieved, as they think, by a systematic perversion of the day into a mere carnival of sensuous pleasure.”

It is true that the combined influences of the various denominations of non-Puritan descent, and the flood of the more recent foreign immigration from Europe, have softened the rigour of the Puritan Sabbath, especially in our large cities. But the essential features remain unchanged in the heart of the people. I know of no serious American Christian, of any evangelical denomination, who would for a moment think of exchanging the Anglo-American Sabbath theory and practice for that of the Continent of Europe, or of Mexico, and Central, and South America. All intelligent foreigners, too, who are not open enemies of religion and virtue, after a few months or years of observation in England, Scotland, or America, must see and acknowledge the great superiority of our theory, at least, in all its *practical* bearings and effects upon the individual, the family, and the people. The foreign German population, for instance, in two crowded mass meetings, held at Cooper Institute, New York, the one in October, 1859, the other in March, 1861, have given strong and emphatic testimony to the Anglo-American

* Here belong the Decrees and Ordinances of Peter Stuyvesant, 1647-8, the Acts of the General Assembly of the Colony of New York, passed in 1695, the laws of the State Legislature in 1813, the Municipal Ordinances, 1797-1834, etc. They are conveniently brought together in the first published document of the New York Sabbath Committee, under the title, “The Sabbath in New York.” New York. 1858.

† The indefatigable Secretary of the New York Sabbath Committee, the Rev. R. S. Cook, in Doc. No. xi. p. 15.

Sabbath, and pledged to it their moral and material support.*

Our theory has stood the strongest of all tests, which the Saviour requires in the words, "By their fruits ye shall know them." Even the excesses of strict Sabbath observance are comparatively harmless, and infinitely less dangerous than the opposite extremes of laxity. There has been much senseless talk against the Judaizing legalism of American Sabbath-keeping from a pseudo evangelical standpoint, which ignores the world as it is, and radically misconceives the essential relation of the gospel to holiness. Daily experience tells us that the great mass of mankind needs the restraint of law as much as ever. The law is still a schoolmaster to lead men unto Christ, and true freedom is not freedom *from* law, but freedom *in* law.

Trials and triumphs of the American Sabbath.

The American Sabbath had its days of trial and temptation, but so far it has manfully and successfully weathered the storm.

1. Its first great trial was the war of the Revolution. War, whatever be its ultimate benefits, is proverbially demoralizing in its immediate effects, by accumulating and intensifying the vices of all classes of society. It is especially regardless of the third and fourth commandments, under the convenient cover of

* Compare Documents No. ix. and No. xvi. of the New York Sabbath Committee, which contain, in the German language, a full account of the two memorable German mass meetings in Cooper Institute. We quote the resolutions heartily and unanimously adopted by the first meeting, which was attended by over fifteen hundred Germans.

"*Resolved*, That we, as Germans, do solemnly protest against the perversion of Sunday from a day of rest and devotion, into a day of noisy excitement and dissipation, which is only too frequent among some of our German countrymen, and brings dishonour on the German name; and that we request our fellow-citizens by no means to charge the fault of many upon the *whole* people and upon Germany, where for many years past noble efforts are successfully making towards the promotion of the better observance of Sunday.

"*Resolved*, That we regard the strict observance of Sunday, which was introduced into this country with the very first settlements of European immigrants, and has ever since been the common custom of the land, by no means as a defect, but on the contrary, as a great advantage and blessing to America, and we will cheerfully assist in keeping it up, and handing it down to future generations.

"*Resolved*, That in the Sabbath laws of this country, as they obtain in nearly every State of our great republican confederacy, we see nothing that conflicts with the cherished principles of civil and religious liberty; on the contrary, we regard them as one of the strongest guarantees of our free institutions; as a wholesome check upon licentiousness and dissipation, and as a preventive of the pauperism and crime which must necessarily undermine and ultimately destroy the liberty of any people."

military necessity, and the old bad maxim, *Inter arma silent leges*. But fortunately for the country, the commander-in-chief and the father of this nation, who will ever stand "first in war, first in peace, and first in the hearts of his countrymen," was a God-fearing man, and issued, August 3, 1776, a general order, which, from a lofty eminence above the passions and strifes of the day, still speaks with telling effect to the armies of the North and of the South, solemnly protesting against the kindred vices of Sabbath breaking and profanity, as follows:

"That the troops may have an opportunity of attending public worship, as well as to take some rest after the great fatigue they have gone through, the General, in future, excuses them from fatigue duty on Sundays, except at the shipyards, or on special occasions, until further orders. The General is sorry to be informed, that the foolish and wicked practice of profane cursing and swearing, a vice hitherto little known in an American army, is growing into fashion. He hopes the officers will, by example as well as influence, endeavour to check it, and that both they and the men will reflect that we can have but little hope of the blessing of Heaven on our arms, if we insult it by our impiety and folly. Added to this, it is a vice so mean and low, without any temptation, that every man of sense and character detests and despises it."*

When, after the successful termination of the war and the achievement of our national independence, the federal Constitution was formed for the permanent organization of our Union, every thing was carefully avoided which might tend to introduce the evils resulting from a union of church and state in the old world—and that not from disrespect, but from respect for religion, which was regarded by our fathers as too sacred to be subjected to the contaminating influence of political interests and secular control. Yet it is very significant and characteristic that in this very document the authority of the Christian Sabbath is incidentally acknowledged, by exempting it from the working days of the chief magistrate of the country in the signature of the bills of Congress;† and this, with the *Anno Domini* of the date, is the only express indication of the Christian origin of the magna charta of the American Union. Congress has ever respected the national habit, and never meets on Sundays, nor does the nation celebrate its birth-day on the fourth of July when it happens to fall on the sacred day of rest.

2. More recently the American Sabbath had to encounter another and more fearful danger, arising from the increasing tide of foreign Sabbath desecration, with its accumulating crimes

* Sparks' Writings of Washington, vol. iv. p. 28.

† Constitution of the United States of America, Art. I. Sect. 7: "If any bill shall not be returned by the President within ten days (*Sundays excepted*) after it shall have been presented to him, the same shall be a law," etc.

and general demoralization. It culminated in New York among the teeming thousands of foreign residents of every nation and tongue. A few years ago the anti-sabbath movement threatened to sweep away the Sabbath alike from our statute books and from our streets, and endangered not only the public morals, but even the material interests of the whole community. But just in the time of the greatest danger, in 1857, God raised up the New York Sabbath Committee, and through their quiet and unobtrusive, but faithful and persevering labours, saved the Sabbath, shut the new flood-gates of drunkenness and crime, restored order and security to the metropolis, secured the coöperation of the better part of the foreign population, enriched our Sabbath-literature by valuable tracts and sermons, and so influenced the legislature and the judiciary of the Empire State, that they not only maintained the old Sunday laws, but committed themselves more strongly than ever in favour of the maintenance of the civil Sabbath.* In every one of the successive suits for the violation of the Sunday theatre act, the question was decided in favour of the constitutionality of laws for the protection of the Christian Sabbath as a civil and political institution, which in the State of New York, as in all other States, exists as a day of rest, by common law, and without the legislative action to establish it, so that all that the legislature attempt to do in the Sabbath laws is to regulate its observance and to protect it from desecration. The opinions of the different courts on this controversy, especially the opinion

* Compare for details the *Documents of the New York Sabbath Committee*, published from 1858 to 1863, which will always fill an important place in the history of the American Sabbath. Also an excellent article on the *Perpetual Observance of the Sabbath*, partly in review of these documents, by Professor Egbert C. Smyth, in the *American Theological Review*, for April, 1862, pp 296-327. Prof. Smyth thus sums up the results of the labours of the New York Sabbath Committee: "A score of Sunday theatres have been closed, the liquor traffic greatly restricted, Sunday news-crying abolished, much useful labour expended among the foreign population, documents in English and German prepared and distributed in great numbers, a manifest advance secured in the popular apprehension of the claims and benefits of the civil Sabbath, the legal right of every man to a weekly season of repose and worship vindicated; and, in brief, a Sunday characterized by traffic, noise, drunkenness, and vice, made to give place to 'a Sabbath marked by refreshing stillness and sobriety,' and an impulse given to similar reformatory movements in other large cities in this country, and also across the Atlantic. Such results are a sufficient proof of the wisdom and energy with which the efforts of the Committee have been conducted. They shed light also upon the true method of prosecuting reformatory measures under a free government."

of Judge Allen of the Supreme Court,* are extremely valuable as a basis for all needful legislation, and a bulwark against future attempts to overthrow or evade the laws of the land.

3. But our cherished institution had hardly been vindicated from the deadly grasp of foreign enemies, when it had to face a more dangerous domestic foe. The severest trial through which the American Sabbath, in common with our whole national Government and Union, with its principles of republican self-government, ever had to pass, or is likely to pass in future, is the civil war which has now been raging with increasing fury for more than two years. The desecration of the Sabbath, together with profanity and intemperance, soon after the outbreak of the war, increased at a most alarming rate, and threatened the people with greater danger than the rebellion itself. But fortunately there was an organization at hand which understood its duty; and rising from a metropolitan to a national importance, elicited from the highest military and civil authorities of the land a testimony in favour of the Sabbath, even more explicit and direct than ever issued from a professedly Christian government.†

Soon after assuming supreme command of the Army of the Potomac, Major-General George B. McClellan issued the following admirable order:

(General Orders No. 7.)

“HEAD-QUARTERS, ARMY OF THE POTOMAC, }
WASHINGTON, Sept. 6, 1861. }

“The Major-General commanding desires and requests that in future there may be more perfect respect for the Sabbath, on the part of his command. We are fighting in a holy cause, and should endeavour to deserve the benign favour of the Creator. Unless in the case of an attack by the enemy, or some other extreme military necessity, it is commended to commanding officers, that all work shall be suspended on the Sabbath; that no unnecessary movements shall be made on that day; that the men shall, so far as possible, be permitted to rest from their labours; that they shall attend divine service after the customary Sunday morning inspection; and that officers and men shall alike use their influence to insure the utmost decorum and quiet on that day. The General commanding regards this as no idle form. One day’s rest in seven is necessary to men and animals,—more than this, the observance of the holy day of the God of mercy and of battles is our sacred duty

“GEORGE B. McCLELLAN,
Major-General Commanding.

“*Official:* A. V. COLBURN, Assistant Adjutant-General.”

* It is published in the Series of Reports of the Supreme Court of New York, and in an authorized abridgment, as Doc. No. XVIII. of the Series of the Sabbath Committee.

† See Document No. XIX. of the New York Sabbath Committee, “A Plea for the Sabbath in War.”

Still more important is the order of the President of the United States, issued in consequence of an interview with a deputation of the New York Sabbath Committee, which were accompanied by the Secretaries of War and the Navy, and Rear-Admiral Foote, and introduced by Governor Morgan, of New York.*

“EXECUTIVE MANSION, WASHINGTON, Nov. 15, 1862.

“The President, Commander-in-Chief of the Army and Navy, desires and enjoins the orderly observance of the Sabbath, by the officers and men in the military and naval service. The importance for man and beast, of the prescribed weekly rest, the sacred rights of Christian soldiers and sailors, a becoming deference to the best sentiment of a Christian people, and a due regard for the Divine will, demand that Sunday labour in the army and navy be reduced to the measure of strict necessity. The discipline and character of the national forces should not suffer, nor the cause they defend be imperilled, by the profanation of the day or name of the Most High. ‘At this time of public distress,’ adopting the words of Washington, in 1776, ‘men may find enough to do in the service of God and their country, without abandoning themselves to vice and immorality.’ The first general order issued by the Father of his Country, after the Declaration of Independence, indicates the spirit in which our institutions were founded and should ever be defended:

“*The General hopes and trusts that every officer and man will endeavour to live and act as becomes a Christian soldier, defending the dearest rights and liberties of his country.*”
ABRAHAM LINCOLN.”

These orders, which were read by millions of people on the very day of their publication, and translated into the German, French, and other tongues, have become part of our national history, and will remain a precedent to our rulers as long as our nation shall endure.

Thus God has overruled even the fearful profanation of the Sabbath, for its defence, by those who represent and reflect his authority in our land.

Conclusion.

But the danger is by no means overpast. Notwithstanding the noble orders from the highest civil and military authorities of the land, and the thrilling sermons of the Almighty God of battles, there is still a most shocking amount of the kindred vices of profanity and Sabbath-breaking in our army, which fills every Christian and patriotic heart with sorrow and grief, and makes it tremble for the future. Unfortunately too many of our officers, even high in command, set the worst possible example to the soldiers. Eternal vigilance is the price not only of our liberty, but also of our Sabbath. Let all the friends of the good cause lift up their hearts and stretch out their hands for the rescue of one of the most conservative and

* See the facts of the interview, in Document No. XXIII.

benevolent institutions of the land. An immense work is before them. Even after a successful military settlement of the present gigantic struggle, there remains the still more difficult task of a political and social solution of our national difficulties, and in this work of reconstruction, Christianity and humanity, wisdom and charity, must take the lead. We have every encouragement to labour in this cause. We have on our side the laws of the land, the traditions of our fathers, the national tastes and habits, the dearest interests of our families and firesides, and the authority of God's word, which is more powerful than all armies and navies.

The Sabbath, like every institution of God intended for the benefit of man, must be either a great blessing, or a great curse, a savour of life unto life, or a savour of death unto death. This is especially the case with us. We need the Sabbath more than any other nation on earth. With us Christianity must stand on its own independent merits, and be rooted and grounded in the affections of a free people. It can never look to the secular power for direct support. Hence the surpassing value of pious national habits and customs, among which the reverent observance of the Sabbath is one of the most important. It stands not isolated and alone, but implies our most sacred rights and privileges, and all the blessings which emanate from public worship. Our energy and restless activity as a nation, our teeming wealth and prosperity, and our very liberty, makes the Sabbath a special necessity for us; for it is a powerful check upon secularism and the degrading worship of the almighty dollar, and upon radicalism and licentiousness, which is death to all true freedom.

The loss of the Sabbath, with all its conservative, purifying and ennobling influences, I do not hesitate to say, would be a far greater disaster to our people North and South, than a permanent separation of the Union—this cherished idol of every loyal American heart. Take away the Sabbath, and you destroy the most humane and most democratic institution which in every respect was made for man, but more particularly for the man of labour and toil, of poverty and sorrow. Take away the Sabbath, and you destroy a mighty conservative force, and dry up a fountain from which the family, the church, and the state receive constant nourishment, and support. Take away

the Sabbath, and you shake the moral foundations of our national power and prosperity: our churches will be forsaken, our Sunday-schools emptied, our domestic devotions will languish, the fountains of public and private virtue will dry up; a flood of profanity, licentiousness, and vice, will inundate the land; labour will lose its reward, liberty be deprived of its pillar, self-government will prove a failure, and our republican institutions end in anarchy and confusion, to give way, in due time, to the most oppressive and degrading military despotism known in the annals of history. Yea, the end of the Sabbath would be for America the beginning of the unlimited reign of the infernal idol-trinity of Mammon, Bacehus, and Venus, and overwhelm us at last in temporal and eternal ruin.

But we confidently hope and believe that, under the protecting care of the Lord of the Sabbath, and the watchfulness of his people, it will survive the shock of this terrible civil war, and the attacks of all its foreign and domestic foes. The Sabbath will mitigate the horrors of war as long as it may last, and when it shall have spent its fury and given way to an honourable and lasting peace, it will be one of the means to remedy its evils, to heal its wounds, to build up its desolations, to cement the Union, and to regenerate the whole nation on a sound and permanent moral and religious foundation. It will continue its weekly testimony to the world at large that our freedom rests in law and order, that we are independent of human tyranny, because we feel dependent on our God, and bow in sacred reverence before the majesty and authority of the Lord of lords and God of gods. It will continue to be one of our most cherished and sacred traditions, an essential characteristic of American Christianity, an intellectual educator, a feeder of public and private virtue, a school of discipline and self-government, a pillar of civil and religious liberty, a bond of union among all Christian denominations, and a "sign" between us and our God as long as this nation shall endure. If we honour the Lord of the Sabbath, he will honour us, sanctify and overrule our present calamities for our own good, and make us a shining light and example among the nations of the earth.

"Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord, and the people whom he hath chosen for his own inheritance."